PROFESSIONAL GRADING STANDARDS AND GRADING PRACTICES GUIDELINES FOR CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS TEACHERS

Developed by the Joint CTU-CBOE Professional Grading Practices Task Force
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PREFACE

The Chicago Teachers Union-Chicago Board of Education 2015-19 provides as follows:

> 44-33.1. <u>Teachers Grading Responsibilities</u>. Teachers are responsible for regularly assessing student progress, notifying students and parents of student progress and for determining students' grades in the subject area or activity for which the teacher is responsible. Teachers shall exercise their independent professional judgment in developing their grading practices. They shall determine the number, type, weighting and frequency of student assignments and tests or other assessments that are used to determine individual course grades. In making that determination, Teachers shall follow the grading guidelines established in ___-2 and district policies on grade changes, grade point averages and grade band values in accordance with Article ___-2, Teachers' grading practices must be published at the beginning of the course and must be clear to students, parents, administration and staff.

> 44-33.2. <u>Grading Practice Guidelines</u>. CPS and CTU shall form a joint task force of 10 educators (five appointed by CPS and five appointed by CTU) to develop CPS professional standards and guidelines for teacher grading practices, *e.g.,* recommended frequency and sequencing of assessment, number of assessments per quarter etc. These grading practice guidelines shall require a coherent approach to grading practices within schools, grade bands and content teams, the use of CPS electronic parent portal "Gradebook" or other electronic system for housing student grades and notifying students and parents of assignments, assessment and grades. The taskforce shall develop the guidelines by consensus to the extent possible and, where not possible, by majority vote of the taskforce members. The taskforce shall issue guidelines as soon as practicable, but in no event later than May 15, 2017, which principals, evaluators and network administrators shall use to guide and assess teachers' grading practices.

The Task Force included several teachers, union representatives, central office administrators, high school principals, elementary principals and principals in schools with specialty programs who worked over a period of 4 months to develop these guidelines. The Guidelines were completed on June 8, 2017. The Guidelines balance the legitimate interests and needs of teachers, principals, students and parents.

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the collective bargaining agreement between the CTU and CPS, a joint task force has developed CPS professional standards and guidelines for teacher grading practices. Teachers shall follow the grading guidelines when developing grading practices. Teachers' grading practices must be published at the beginning of the course and must be clear to students, parents, administration and staff. Principals, evaluators, and network administrators shall use the CPS professional standards and guidelines to guide and assess teachers' grading practices.

Grading is a foundational element in an education system. The primary function of grading is to provide feedback related to student academic achievement expressed through the Illinois Learning Standards[1] and/or learning objectives for each course of study undertaken. Grades are captured through formative and summative assessments and are intended to represent a fair and honest indication of a student's present level of academic mastery at a given point in time.

Grading serves the following purposes:

1. Evaluate the quality and accuracy of student work and overall performance at various stages of a particular course;
2. Creates opportunities for reflective dialogue and communication among educators, parents, students, and others.
3. Determine student instructional placement and promotion (i.e. accelerated programs, interventions, instructional groupings, etc.);
4. Marks transitions, bring closure and focus effort for both students and teachers (i.e. re-teaching, differentiating, end of quarter, end of semester, etc).

In cases where a school team opts to create or refine school-wide grading policies and practices, school teams must engage in a collaborative process. These policies and practices will conform to the provisions of these Guidelines.

The guidelines developed by the Task Force are organized by the following components that are essential to effective grading practice: 1) Assessments, 2) Frequency, 3) Categories and Weights, 4) Alignment, 5) Specialty Programs, and 6) Resolution of Disputes.

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[1] The Illinois Learning Standards are the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

1. ASSESSMENTS

Assessments are an integral part of the overall grading process and should be incorporated in the Gradebook and/or school grading platform. A balanced assessment system effectively measures the depth and breadth of student learning and monitors student progress. It also produces actionable data to inform planning for instruction, academic supports, and resource allocation. To meet these goals, a balanced assessment system must include multiple measures and be responsive to the needs of all students, including diverse learners and English learners. Grading practices/grade entry should reflect evidence of both formative and summative assessments over time.

- Formative Assessment: Formative assessments are frequent and inform instructional decision-making throughout a marked period of time (i.e. units, quarters, etc.). Formative assessments are also utilized for collegial discussions about instruction and inform shifts in scaffolding and/or pacing within a unit. What makes an assessment "formative" is not the design of a test, technique, or self-evaluation, per se, but the way it is used—i.e., to inform in-process teaching and learning modifications.

- Summative Assessment: Summative assessments are used to evaluate student learning, skill acquisition, and academic achievement at the conclusion of a defined instructional period—typically at the end of a project, unit, course, semester, program, or school year. Summative assessments should demonstrate mastery of final knowledge and skills that were taught throughout the unit (i.e. attainment). Summative-assessment results are often recorded as scores or grades that are then factored into a student's permanent academic record.

Note: Standardized testing results are not to be entered as grades (i.e. NWEA, TRC, SAT, ISA, etc.).

*A sample list of assessments is in Appendix.

2. FREQUENCY

Frequency in grading denotes the interval at which grades are entered and the total amount of grades entered over time for each subject category to ensure that student performance is captured fairly and accurately throughout each marking period/semester.

In accordance with the CPS professional standards and guidelines for teacher grading practices, teachers determine the number and type of grades entered in line with the following:

- Grades are entered on a weekly basis in the Gradebook or district approved school grading platform.
- In cases where special circumstances prevent a full instructional week (3 or less instructional days due to holidays or other interruptions that result in a significant loss of instructional time), teachers are to determine grade entry in consultation with the principal.
- Every category needs to show a sufficient number of grades to assess student achievement both at progress reports and end of the quarter.
- Grades for the agreed upon categories should be balanced and a fair representation of student performance across multiple categories to ensure that students are supported

appropriately throughout the quarter/semester.
- Ensure that parents and students can review grades in time for students to recover before the grading period ends.
- During the last week of the quarter, teachers shall have a reasonable number of days to complete final quarter grade entry.

Notes for Elementary Science and Social Studies:
- Grades are to be entered every two weeks for elementary non-departmentalized science and social studies classes, which have a lower number of required instructional minutes in comparison to other core instructional minutes or do not meet on a daily basis. (e.g. In K-5, CPS requires 600 minutes for literacy per week versus 150 minutes for social studies per week).

Notes for Non-Core:
- Grades are to be entered on a weekly basis for high school *non-core* subjects.
- Grades are to be entered every two weeks for elementary *non-core* subjects (including: health, music, art, computer, drama, library, physical education, etc).

3. CATEGORY/WEIGHTS

Educators need to be mindful of the categories and weights of grades in order to result in final grades that communicate a student's performance, both in terms of growth and attainment. The end goal is to measure student learning and academic growth as well as communicate academic achievement based on curricular standards and objectives.

Grade Categories
- Teachers need to have categories in order to enter grades. These can be customized or teachers can use the CPS default categories. However, adjustments to categories cannot be made during the course of a quarter, only at the end of a quarter/semester. Customization of categories shall reflect alignment to the key components of an instructional program/curriculum requirements by subject.

- Categories are to be created to capture both formative and summative assessment types separately. (See Appendix for types of assessments)

- There is to be a sufficient number of grades entered per each established weight category to be able to calculate an accurate overall average for each core subject area.

- In elementary schools, a variety of categories (at least 3) determined in each grade-level (1-2, 3-5, 6-8), and "non-core"/specials classes such as: Art, Music, Physical Education (at least 2).

- High school course teams will determine which categories they will use (at least 3).

- No single category shall be weighted more than 50% with the exception being non-core/specials classes in elementary school. (See frequency for a minimum number of grades per category per week).

- Course (HS) and grade-level (ES) teams in each course/grade-level use the same category/weights as their team members to ensure consistency. This process should be collaborative to help gain consensus of the full team. Teams should be able to show evidence of consensus reached.

__Weight Percentages__ assigned to each category within each subject is to be logically distributed and weighted by significance to equitably reflect the curriculum, assessment, instructional practices aligned to the course to average a final grade at the end of each quarter.

- Category weights are to reflect the complexity of tasks, assignments, or assessments to accurately demonstrate student learning.

- Categories for *Participation* and *Homework* are not to individually account for the majority of a summative grade.

- To encourage student success, students shall be allowed the opportunity to recover and improve.

  NOTE: In cases when a teacher develops distinct categories and weights apart from their course/grade-level teams, those categories and weights are to be developed in consultation with the Principal.

4. ALIGNMENT

The State of Illinois and Chicago Public Schools have adopted the Illinois Learning Standards. Therefore, grades are to align with standards, curricular goals, objectives, lesson content, and/or assessments; therefore, creating a direct link between what is taught, what is measured, and a student's grade.

Assignments and assessments are measured using clear criteria that connect with the standards-based objectives (or in cases of severe and profound programs - objectives outlined in an IEP) and be communicated to the students in advance of the assignment and assessment. The net result, once grades are entered, is a grade that captures student performance on actual standards or curricular goals and not on disconnected or compliance-oriented tasks.

Therefore, schools should engage in meaningful and collaborative dialogue on how the categories and weights in Gradebook and/or district approved school grading platform are intentionally aligned to reflect the key components of the instructional program and standards or curricular goals taught in order to measure student growth and progress, and communicate academic achievement.

Criteria for alignment:
- Reflect varying levels of complexity in tasks, text, assignments so that grades reflect a difference between memorization of rote facts and depth of knowledge and understanding (See Bloom's Taxonomy, Hess' Cognitive Rigor Matrix, or Depth of Knowledge Framework in Appendix).
- Align Gradebook and/or district approved school grading platform to programmatic requirements (IB, STEM, STEAM, competency-based grading, etc.) (See specialty grading section)

- All grading around the grade category of participation is to align to explicit criteria derived from the [CCSS Speaking & Listening Standards](#) or for high schools program specific criterion. In the case of non-core disciplines (i.e. music, art, physical education, library, technology, CTE, etc.) when CCSS Speaking & Listening standards may not be applicable, participation grades shall align to performance standards defined for the specified discipline.
- Separate academic from non-academic factors in Gradebook and/or district approved school grading platform. Student conduct is not to be considered a factor when assigning grades for academic performance.

5. GRADING IN SPECIALTY PROGRAMS

Schools that offer specialty programs (e.g. International Baccalaureate, Montessori, Gifted, or CTE) must develop and implement a grading and assessment policy that is consistent with the guidelines and expectations outlined by their supporting organizations in order to maintain a legitimate and accredited program.

In schools piloting programs (e.g. Competency Based Learning/Personalized Learning), grading and assessment practices should be developed in consultation with the Principal.

In accordance with the *CTU Collective Bargaining Agreement* and the *CPS Professional Standards and Guidelines for Teacher Grading Practices,* all teachers in schools offering specialty programs or pilot programs must publish grading practices at the start of the school year. These grading practices must be clear to students, parents, administration and staff.

6. DISPUTE RESOLUTION

In the event of a dispute regarding application of school grading policies, the PPC and the Principal should meet and try to resolve the dispute collaboratively through consensus building. In the event consensus cannot be reached, the matter may be subject to strategic bargaining for resolution.

Formative and Summative Assessments

In short, formative assessment is all about forming judgments frequently in the flow of instruction, whereas summative assessment focuses on making judgments at some point in time after instruction (Roskos and Neuman, 2012). Below are some examples of formative and summative assessments, which can be used to ensure students are meeting the learning objectives.

- Retellings (formative)
- Cloze tests (formative)
- Self-Assessment surveys (formative)
- Discussion Group Assessment Checklist and Responses (formative)
- Teacher – created quizzes (formative)
- Checklists (formative and summative)
- Reading Logs (formative and summative)
- Projects (formative and summative)
- Departmental Teacher Surveys of Student progress (formative and summative)
- Rubrics (Holistic and Analytic) as a tool for assessing work (formative and summative)
- Portfolio collection (formative and summative)
- Teacher – created tests (summative)
- Unit tests (summative)
- Performance Tasks (summative)

Bloom's Taxonomy

The cognitive domain involves knowledge and the development of intellectual skills (Bloom, 1956). This includes the recall or recognition of specific facts, procedural patterns, and concepts that serve in the development of intellectual abilities and skills. There are six major categories of cognitive processes, starting from the simplest to the most complex.

- Knowledge
- Comprehension
- Application
- Analysis
- Synthesis
- Evaluation

The categories can be thought of as degrees of difficulties. That is, the first ones must normally be mastered before the next one can take place.

[Verb Use Tool for Teachers](#)

[Bloom's Action Verbs](#)

[DOK & Bloom's Matrix](#)

[Hess' Cognitive Rigor Matrix](#)

[Hess' Sentence Stems](#)

[Tools for Depth of Knowledge Framework](#)